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Foreign Office Briefing on Soviet Mainland, Oct. 17 1962.

James Maitland, Director of the Foreign Office News Division, Michael Ratkov, also was present.

What is the Foreign Office assessment of Berlin? There were strong speculations that this in won last week that after the elections the Russians would go ahead and sign an East German Peace Treaty. The Foreign Office was puzzled. It is not under the impression that there is any great difference of assessment with the other Government over Soviet intentions. There are plans for many contingencies.

Britain does not exclude that after the elections some kind of pressure will be resumed. This might include harassment on the ground and in the air. Further action respecting East Berlin, or propaganda in the United Nations with a descent on New York or Khrushchev. The West should be ready to respond and show the Russians the dangers of any uni-lateral action altering the status quo.

Despite the possibility that tension may increase, the Foreign Office doubts whether the Russians will sign a separate Peace Treaty. They and the East Germans have said that they would make another effort to negotiate on Berlin. Ulbricht said this to the East German Socialist (Communist) Party again last week.

The Russians must themselves be apprehensive of the consequences of a Treaty, with all its side effects in the ending of occupation rights. If they were to sign a Treaty which did not produce these effects, it would be a greater humiliation and add nothing to their present status. Nevertheless, the West must leave the Russians in no doubt of the risks if they should sign a Peace Treaty. Interference with access to Berlin might precipitate a war. The Home-Gromyko talks were designed to leave no doubts on this point.

What about stories that the Russians might renew interference with civil traffic? These emanate from Germany, and this is not a new German preoccupation. The Germans think that the Russians might require passports for West Germans -- some measure of recognition for East Germany. Maitland does not know what the British response would be. But Britain has always maintained that access is an all-inclusive term.

Why then the seeming differences with Washington? Maitland is confident that the difference of assessment if any is very

minor. The views in the Ambassadorial group in Washington are more related when some of the comments in the Press. It is possible that some of the recent alarm had stemmed from the Gollamara and Bundy speeches -- which were themselves designed to tell the Russians not to go too far. This of course is a matter of necessity.

At the same time, there have been a number of signals from the Russians (undefined) that they would prefer further discussions before attempting a Peace Treaty. This was implicit in the late announcement that the Russians would hold off until after the elections.

What about the possibility of a Peace Treaty that would not hand over control of the country? What would the Russians gain in such a situation? The purpose of signing a Peace Treaty is to liquidate the Western occupation. Would this not be a worse humiliation? Access is an absolute term, and Britain has never distinguished between civil and military access.

Have there been any new Russian hints? No. We have all been through the line of having the Russians tell us that Khrushchev is the best Prime Minister we have, and then having them renew their threats. These don't get anywhere.

Is there any new indication that Khrushchev will go to New York? Britain does not exclude this. But there is nothing definite indicating that Khrushchev wants to see Kennedy; rather this is a possibility left open. (Midland emphasised that he did not have any information on the Khrushchev talk). There has been some discussion here of the possibility raised at Geneva of a Council of Soviet Foreign Ministers in more or less permanent session -- but the Russians never took up the idea.

Has there been any indication here of a Soviet offer to make a "deal" to leave Vietnam in Cuba in exchange for concessions in Berlin? Absolutely not. This looks like a demand.

What is the status of British thinking to Cuba? There is nothing new. Britain has had frequent contacts with the State Department about the various American measures which will be implemented quite soon. Britain has made her views known and hopes that they will be taken into account.

There have now been two big things over the Alpha-66 incident, in addition to the statement by a spokesman in San Juan. This has revealed our Foreign Department view on people wanting United States territory for this sort of action.

Will British shipping to Cuba unofficially respect the American boycott? The International Chamber of Shipping, in a press statement, said this week that of the 19 allied nations trading with Cuba not one was carrying arms. Thus the question of military cargoes is academic. Of course there is a distinction between arms and other cargoes. Britain has been fearful that one of her own ship captains might be "framed" by "communist machinery" that turned out to be a howitzer.

More serious is the attempt to deny port facilities to British ships carrying cargoes to Cuba and then stopping at American ports. This is an economic factor of importance. The significant point is the attitude of the international longshoremen's association. It has said that it would not give service to any ship of any country trading with Cuba. The whole matter raises all kinds of questions of principle about freedom of navigation.

Has Britain any new information about Communist withdrawals in Laos? Britain had the impression that on the October 7 deadline there were a fair number of stragglers. Her assessments are in line with the American views. The United States has not formally approached the International Control Commission and Souvanna Phouma; reports that it had were garbled. The job of checking on withdrawals is in the first place that of the International Control Commission, and the I.C.C. must work with the Laotian government. This is a long term problem, and in the first analysis the efforts of the I.C.C. must be respected.

What will the meeting of the European Free Trade Association in Oslo this next week-end accomplish? There is really nothing very much new. Inspired stories have been coming out of Europe on various ideas of the Six, but these are mere speculation.

Denmark applied for membership in the Common Market the day after Britain applied. Negotiations opened last November and are running parallel with the British negotiations. In May